11:53 AM

February 24, 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. TOLSON
MR. BELMONT
MR. ROSEN
MR. SULLIVAN
MR. EVANS
MR. DE LOACH

Honorable J. Lee Rankin, General Counsel of the President's Commission on the assassination of President Kennedy, called and stated these matters in regard to Mrs. Marina Oswald and James Herbert Martin, et cetera, are developing very rapidly and the Bureau has been very good about getting reports to the Commission. He stated the thing he wanted to ask me about seemed to be something he felt he ought to take up with me directly. He stated the problem is that Marina Oswald is now living at the Ford's and presumably the Commission is going to want her back one of those days and he, Rankin, presumed I knew about the Nixon matter, too, because I had written them about it. Mr. Rankin stated he would hate to have her just run out on us, which is always a possibility, particularly down in Dallas, and he was wondering about a stake out on her which would watch her and see who is visiting her for a while. Mr. Rankin stated he hated to recommend it or urge it in view of the expense involved. I asked him how long he would anticipate it remaining on, and Mr. Rankin stated he thought it would be according to my judgment.

I told Mr. Rankin that we plan to interview her today, that we had wanted to do so last week but the lawyer for Robert Oswald was up here in Washington and asked us before he left Dallas if we would postpone any interview with Mrs. Marina Oswald until he got back from the hearing up here in Washington as she was exhausted. I stated I would surmise that he would be back there this morning as I thought Robert Oswald finished up with the Commission last Friday. I stated we will want to interview Robert, too, as we are interested in the Nixon angle that developed and also the affair she had with Martin; that we planned to conduct the interview of her today if she is available and also of Robert Oswald if he is available. Mr. Rankin stated they asked Robert Oswald why he did not tell them about it and he said he felt the Commission would probably know about that, but in all his answers were generally very good.

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February 24, 1964

Memorandum for Messrs. Tolson, Belmont, Rosen, Sullivan, Evans, DeLoach

I stated the thing in the Nixon matter which does not exactly ring sound with me is knowing the background of Lee Harvey Oswald and his makeup temperamentally, et cetera, how the wife would be able to lock him in a bathroom all day without his kicking the door down because he gave evidence of having a violent temper. Mr. Rankin commented also that he had beat her up on occasion. I stated that is the only angle of that story which did not seem to hold water. I stated she never mentioned it to us at any time nor did Robert Oswald mention it to us and that is why we wanted to question her again because we have not talked to her since she appeared before the Commission and, of course, Robert Oswald was here in Washington. I stated it is a fact that Richard Nixon was in Dallas sometime in 1963, and Mr. Rankin stated it was November 21st, the day before the assassination. I stated Nixon was invited to receive some award and had to cancel out and he got down to Dallas just the day before the assassination and the question is, was it at that particular time, as Mrs. Oswald's story purports, that she locked Lee Oswald in the bathroom. I stated that did not make sense to me.

I stated we can, of course, stake out the place where Marina Oswald is now living and find out who is going in and out to see her at this new place, but my question is, approximately how long does Mr. Rankin anticipate waiting. Mr. Rankin stated he would leave that to my judgment. I stated I would think if we can interview her today, if the new lawyer allows us to do so and we have no objection if he wants to be present even, and also Robert Oswald, that as soon as we finish those two interviews and get the facts and unless there are some other angles, that particular angle will then be pretty well bottled up and we could get the information to the Commission certainly by the middle of this week. Mr. Rankin stated that would be very helpful as they have Martin coming voluntarily before the Commission on Thursday so if he could get that information before that, it would be helpful. I stated we can do that and in the meantime we can put the surveillance on Marina Oswald.

Mr. Rankin stated that one thing the new lawyer, McKenzie (phonetic), did was to bring the contracts with both Robert and Marina and while they have the usual provisions, he also has the right to disclose anything in regard to this matter he should learn irrespective of the client-lawyer relationship, and McKenzie assured Mr. Rankin and the Commission he would make full and complete disclosure of anything he discovered, so Mr. Rankin thinks we will get full cooperation from McKenzie. I stated this fellow John M. Thorne is contending he is her lawyer.

February 24, 1964

Memorandum for Messrs. Tolson, Belmont, Mohr, Sullivan, Evans, DeLoach

Mr. Rankin stated he has copies of letters from Thorne to Martin and in one he is terminating Martin's relationship and there is another one to Mrs. Marina Oswald from Thorne in which he protests the termination of his employment and one from Martin to both Thorne and Mrs. Oswald saying he can't be fired. I stated I thought he had issued a statement this morning that he is still her "contractural lawyer," that while she has a right to hire as many advisors as she sees fit, he is still her "contractural lawyer."

Mr. Rankin continued that in Martin's letter he says he has sold various interests such as TV rights to Tex-Italia Film (phonetic) and her memoirs to a magazine of Hamburg, Germany, and he has sold the picture rights, et cetera. Mr. Rankin stated Thorne's letter says they have entered into contracts involving an excess of $150,000, so it can be seen what is involve. I commented this is just a nasty shakedown, notwithstanding her character; that these two individuals are doing everything in their power to make as much money as they can out of her and this applies to the other fellow in New York connected with Lee Oswald's mother.

Mr. Rankin stated that while working on this, he would like me to keep an eye on this thing to see whether it looks at all like this [redacted] was possibly with any idea of trying to get rid of Martin and Thorne. I stated that was within the realm of possibility. Mr. Rankin stated it looks like Marina Oswald was pretty quick to do that, but on the other hand, Robert Oswald, from the reports, is pretty straight laced and Mr. Rankin thought if she did not want to get rid of them, he would not have tolerated this. Mr. Rankin stated he thoug maybe she got in with Oswald over in Russia that way and maybe other things have happened over here, as Mr. Rankin stated it looks like from our reports it is possible something went on before they came up to Washington although the Secret Service did not think there was any opportunity, but he was certainly loo at her any chance he had. I stated there was plenty of opportunity here in Wash ington, as according to the Secret Service, Martin and she stayed up to view television until the early hours in the morning and the Secret Service man was in the corridor, so what went on in the room nobody knows. I stated it is those angles we hope to explore with her today. Mr. Rankin stated with Martin chasing her and doing all those things with his wife around, he can imagine what he did when he was free from his wife. I stated he had no compunction so far as his wife was concerned as they were open and above board with the wife in the house. I stated it is an unfortunate thing, but what worries me is the possibility of a leak getting out on this as to the background of the Oswald wom and Martin, et cetera, because those people are talking around down there in Dallas, but it would be unfortunate to have it get out before the Commission

- 2 -

tion it down here as to these activities and anybody else who may have knowledge of it.

Mr. Rankin asked if I didn't think that business about her being willing to be Martin's mistress was a strange thing, and I stated I did; that it shows certainly the complete lack of any character and the thing that also impressed me was, if you look at the picture of Mrs. Marina Oswald when this happened and the picture of her afterwards, it is almost like two different people, as in the second picture of her she is not unattractive, but the first picture in Dallas, when this occurred, shows her as sloppy and unattractive; but somebody got hold of her and got her fixed up and that probably put ideas into her head also. I stated there is no question this fellow Martin was making love to her, and the thing about buying a house and divorcing his wife, although I did not know if he was serious, was a proposition and, of course, he was probably counting upon her money to buy the house. I stated there was no force, but complete willingness upon her and his part, and this just makes her out as a pretty questionable character. I stated that kind of thing if it gets out before it is nailed down and the Commission reaches a conclusion as to what and what not to believe, would be bad. I stated why she did not tell us about this Nixon matter, I did not know as she told us about the General Walker matter. I stated my reaction to this business about locking Lee Oswald in the bathroom is that there is something fishy here because she just would not be able to do this because he had beat her upon occasion, was nasty to her, had a bad disposition, and could have gotten out by breaking the window or kicking the door down and she would have been perfectly helpless and, further, she left out what he did then, as I don't think he would have taken it calmly. I stated it is a fact Nixon was there the day before the assassination and it will be a sensational story because he is a former Vice President and very anti-communist and General Walker is anticommunist and then the President of the United States was there. I stated it is such a thing that you could enlarge on it and have some sensational stories, just like the story of Dorothy Kilgallen about the FBI furnishing assistance to Ruby, that upon reading the article, you could see it does not support the headline, but you have down there in Dallas these "bleeding hearts" and "sobsisters" like Kilgallen, who will blow everything up as much as they can. I commented I had also wondered where Life Magazine got that photograph of Lee Oswald with the guns, but I understand they got it from the Dallas Police Department. I stated my first knowledge of it was when my attention was called to it by the Hearst people who had an

advance copy as one of them called me and wanted to know who was giving it out and how it could be copyrighted. If Mrs. Oswald sold it, that is one thing, but if the Dallas Police gave it to Life, it was public property, and I advised the Hearst people they ought not to stir anything up on it, as we did not know whether the Dallas Police gave it out or if Mrs. Oswald sold it and if she sold it, it would be subject to copyright, but if given out by a law enforcement agency, it would not be subject to copyright.

Mr. Rankin stated he understood from my letter that the Nixon affair really seemed to originate from Martin who had been told that by Marina Oswald. I stated also Marina told it to Robert when he went to the grave with her, so it came from those two sources. I stated I did not think we got it from Martin but from Robert. Mr. Rankin stated that Martin the same day told Robert, but did not say how long he had known it. I stated the original information as I recall, was from Robert who was told it by Marina and also by Martin as she told Martin about it. I commented that why they did not tell the Commission, I did not know. I asked if Robert Oswald was questioned as to that aspect, and Mr. Rankin stated he was and he said he thought the Commission knew it. I stated they are going too much on assumption all the way through. I stated that is what worries me as it spreads out and gets to be a web almost. I stated we have been checking carefully in Mexico City and have additional agents down there and every one we run out fizzles out, but the average Mexican in my opinion is a psychological liar as they have visions probably of getting money or being brought up for testimony, but so far there is no confirmation of the various angles, but we have added men in Mexico to try to get that cleaned up within the next week or ten days, but something more comes up every day.

Mr. Rankin stated in connection with the stake out, to use my own judgment, but before terminating it, to let him know. He stated again he did not want to run up too much expense. I stated if we can get the interview today we will get that and we may want to talk to this lawyer that she now has and as soon as we get that we will have the facts which will be sent in by wire. I stated we will then get it to him, Mr. Rankin, and I thought the Commission may then want to consider getting her back quickly and getting it on record, because in the meantime she is going to be writing articles and books and she is bound to include this Nixon thing in it and if the Commission does not have it nailed down, it will become known. I stated Lee Oswald was not an individual who a[illegible] to discuss things with his wife other than the Walker situation. I stated that did occur and while we are not able definitely to swear that the same gun was

in the Walker case as in the assassination, because of the mutilation of the bullet, there are many similar marks and you certainly could draw the conclusion it was the same gun, but it is one of those instances where you can't say you are 100% sure.

Mr. Rankin stated there was one other thing - McKenzie told him that they had made a suggestion to the Fords that Decla Ford be her new manager. I stated everybody is going to move in on her and there will probably be some others move in from other parts of the country, and being the character she is they need only to invite her out and entertain her a little and she would probably go because she is her own free agent now.

Mr. Rankin stated he thought it well to check from a stake out what kind of people are visiting her when she does not know she is under surveillance. I stated we can also consider getting a telephone tap in there because there can't be any trial so any information would not be excluded in a trial, but if somebody were going to be tried it would be a different thing. I stated we will get on it right away.

12:15 PM

I called Mr. Joseph Sizoo in the Domestic Intelligence Division and advised him of Mr. Rankin's call and his desire to have, if possible, a stake out of the place where Mrs. Marina Oswald is now living and he is very anxious to know who may be going in and coming out of that place seeing her in view of the turmoil [redacted] and also I think we ought to consider placing a technical on the phone where she is now living. I also stated that Dallas should be advised that we want to get Mrs. Oswald interviewed today, that we had held off because of the request of her new lawyer and I understand from Rankin he seems to be a pretty decent fellow, that we ought to see her today and get the details of the Nixon thing.

I stated the Commission wants to bring her back here before them and they will just as soon as we get this information from our interview with her. I stated I thought we ought to interview Robert Oswald also as to the Nixon thing because she told him about it when he went out to the grave with her. I stated the first person she told was Martin who was her business manager and who had relations with her. I stated Martin is under subpoena to be back here before the Commission so I doubt if we can interview him or if we did whether he would say anything, but I think we should interview her and Robert and have

February 24, 1964

Memorandum for Messrs. Tolson, Belmont, Mohr, Sullivan, Evans, DeLoach

Dallas wire that in at once as we ought to get this material to the Commission not later than Wednesday so our manpower will not be tied down with surveilling her and to also try to get a technical in. I told Mr. Sizoo it will run until they subpoena her back before the Commission as I suggested to Rankin it ought to last only as long as it takes us to get the information to the Commission. I stated she did not tell the Commission anything about it, that Robert did, but she did not and they want to nail it down and this so-called [redacted] that took place at the hotel, but we ought to get details of that from her today and get any other details we can from Robert and then we ought to get that by letter to the Commission not later than Wednesday. Mr. Sizoo stated it would be a discreet surveillance unknown to her to see who comes and goes to see her. I stated also if she comes out, where she goes, that it required discretion. I told Sizoo to also see that Dallas has sufficient manpower for the physical surveillance of her and the people coming to the house ought to be followed to see who they are. I stated her new lawyer, McKenzie, has suggested this man she is living with now become her business agent. I stated what the Commission is concerned about is this sudden development as to her seduction and Nixon, as it may leak out. I told Sizoo to get hold of Dallas and to get started on it right away. Mr. Sizoo stated he would.

Very truly yours,

J. E. H.

John Edgar Hoover
Director

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TIME [illegible]
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